

## MORE ABUNDANT LIFE.

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He is a poor specimen of a Christian who is satisfied to be to-day no better than he was yesterday. To be barely alive is not enough. Jesus promises to all his blood bought disciples that they shall have "life more abundantly." We give away to impenitent sinners or to seeking souls some precious promises which belong to true believers. "A new heart I give unto you; a new spirit will I put within you." Such promises reach beyond inquiry-rooms; they are for everyday consumption by us who claim to be Christians. We need to have a new heart again and again, just as our faces require frequent washing and our bodies require frequent feeding. Christ is an inexhaustible fountain-head of life, and it depends upon ourselves as to how much of this divine life shall stream into our souls.

(1.) One of the indications of an increased Christ-life in the soul will be more *vigor*. I have a tree in my yard that used to issue its promissory notes in May and failed to redeem them with more than a handful of fruit in August. It shook down its beautiful white blossoms in the spring, and that about exhausted it. I dug about it and applied a strong fertilizer, and now it fills a big basket with delicious pears. So does our Master often deal with us. He puts in the plow of sharp providences that make tearing work about the roots, and dislodge the vermin of besetting sins. With the trials come the strengthening graces. When a man's system is in a low, impoverished condition he is apt to catch any fever that is a going. So it is a low spiritual life that breeds worldliness and stinginess and censoriousness and other acute attacks of sinful lusts. With a sick soul, as with a sick body, the problem often is whether there is vitality enough inside to slough off the disease. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," said Jesus, when Simon Peter was in a bad way; but for imparted grace, that ugly attack in Pilate's hall might have been the end of poor Peter. When he got the more abundant vigor of Christ's spirit he went through tenfold greater dangers unharmed. Why should any Christian be merely gasping, when he ought to be "strengthened with all power in his inner man, according to the might" of Christ Jesus? The more vigor we desire the more we shall receive, and the more we receive the more we will be able to receive.

(2.) A second evidence of increased life is an increase of *faith*. A small faith can move mole-hills; a stalwart faith can remove mountains. It is the feebleness of

the grip on God that makes it so hard for us to stand the heavy strains or to lift the heavy loads. This is the reason why some parents and teachers produce no impression on the young hearts committed to them; for this same reason many pastors reap no harvests. "According to your *faith* be it unto you." This is Christ's mode of measurement. Mr. Spurgeon tells us of a fervent, fearless preacher who went into a region where wickedness abounded. In one of his first sermons he said: "Now, you may squirm and scoff as much as you will, but I tell you that before a twelve-month hundreds of you will be converted. I have asked the Lord for this and he will give it to me." And the Lord did give him what he looked for and labored for; within less than a year there were six hundred conversions. Faith signifies the grappling union of the soul with the Almighty Saviour. The closer the connection the more power flows in. A current of electricity sent through a huge horse-shoe magnet will enable it to support a weight of a thousand pounds; stop the current and the weight drops instantly. The more abundant our faith the fuller will be the inflow of Christ. Paul's secret was just this: "Not I, but Christ that liveth in me; and the life I live I live by *faith* on the Son of God."

(3.) If Christ be in us more abundantly there will be a great influx of joy. None of us is as happy as he or she might be. Some Christians carry such a doleful countenance and cheerless atmosphere, that if they should venture to urge a friend to come to Christ, the answer might very properly be: "No, I thank you. I have troubles enough of my own without adding to them such a forlorn religion as yours." Such Christians cheat themselves out of their birthright. Jesus assures us that his joy may remain in us and that our joy may be full. Raptures are not always vouchsafed even to the healthiest disciple. But a healthy man will enjoy eating a ripe peach; a loving wife enjoys a husband's kiss; and there must be something wrong with a man or woman who professes to feed on Christ, and to do Christ's will, and yet finds no delight in it. How can we have Jesus in our souls and yet feel no joy? Just as soon expect to find an aviary full of canaries and gold-finches and larks that should be as silent as a tomb. Joy is love looking at its treasures. The richer we become in Christ's presence now, and the expectation of dwelling with him forever—the more investments we make in doing good to others and in saving souls, the more abundant will be the casket of our jewels. When a person says to me "I don't enjoy

my religion," the proper reply is—then you cannot have enough religion to enjoy. Get fuller of Christ and he will put the sunshine into your soul and the song into your mouth.

(4.) Another token of increased life will be an increased resistance to sin and a quickening of *conscience* in every-day transactions. One of the most lamentable lacks in too many church-members is the lack of a sensitive, healthy conscience. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after *righteousness*," said our Lord. We talk of this brother or that one as "weak;" but in ethics to be weak is to be wicked. It is just these weak professors who are bringing shame on the name of Christianity. Religious motives may burn brightly in a prayer-meeting, but be blown out like a candle as soon as a strong wind of temptation strikes it in the open air. Dr. Hodge said of a certain eminent Christian, "he was not only pious, he was *good*." A true distinction that. Now, if the Lord Jesus dwell in our hearts more abundantly the moral sense will be quickened, the heart will be cleaner, and in that holy atmosphere fraud and falsehood and greed and sophistry and injustice cannot breathe. When questions of right and wrong arise, we will give Christ the casting vote. Our whole daily conduct will be straight-forward and by the air-line, because we give the helm into the hand of Him with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning.

Are all these graces of faith, power, joy, love and practical godliness attainable? Of course they are. Yonder tree has been made luxuriant in foliage and germs of fruit by simply drawing the vital sap up into trunk and boughs. Even so if you will let Christ have unhindered flow into your will and your affections you will be not barren or unfruitful, but will *abound* in the work of the Lord. Take a *large* life with you into Heaven.

## PRAYER.

Prayer is to lay our inner man wholly open to the light of God in genuine, earnest simplicity, to be quite shorn through by him.—*Edersheim*.

I have lived to thank God that all my prayers have not been answered.—*Jean Ingelow*.

Prayer is a golden key which should open the morning and lock up the evening.—*Bishop Hopkins*.

Prayer is so mighty an instrument that no one thoroughly mastered all its keys. They sweep along the infinite scale of man's wants and God's goodness.—*Hugh Miller*.